



U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary

F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Chairman

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News Advisory

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Sensenbrenner Remarks at Press Conference With U.S. Attorney General Gonzales Highlighting DOJ Anti-Gang Grant to Milwaukee

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Judiciary Committee Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R-Wis.) today joined U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and other officials in Milwaukee to highlight a \$2.5 million Department of Justice grant to Milwaukee to help fight gangs in the area. Chairman Sensenbrenner's remarks are below.

“Good morning. It's a pleasure to join in welcoming Attorney General Gonzales to the area.

“We are here today working to fight gangs on our streets. Many are beginning to understand that gangs and gang violence are not problems unique to inner-city areas. Gangs are an ever-present and growing problem in communities across America. In fact, every American city with more than 250,000 people has reported gang activity. This reality is unsettling, and if not addressed, gang-related violence will continue to fester and spread.

“Holding gang-bangers accountable for their violent criminal activity – along with preventing gangs and gang-related activity – must lie at the heart of any anti-gang effort. The Attorney General has described how this pilot grant program should assist in this effort.

“We are extremely grateful for this grant because Milwaukee is in desperate need of these additional resources provided by the U.S. Justice Department. In recent years, the public has benefitted from the tireless efforts of law enforcement and tough and creative policies enacted by leaders to bring violent crime to historically-low levels nationwide. This dramatic drop in crime is most notable in major cities like New York, Miami, and Los Angeles. However, here in Milwaukee, as evidenced by a homicide rate higher last year than the year before, we have a lot of work to do.

“While this Justice Department grant can help us fight gangs here in Wisconsin, we need our state and local leaders to make combating gangs a priority if any real change here is

going to occur.

“The House Judiciary Committee, which I chair, is taking a national leadership role to combat gangs and the violence associated with them. The Committee has investigated the threat gangs present to public safety and has drafted legislation to help eradicate gangs from our streets. The “Gang Deterrence and Community Protection Act” provides new tools and increases penalties for Federal gang prosecutions, which are modeled on similar laws used to eradicate organized crime. Gang activity in America is no different than traditional organized crime syndicates; therefore, law enforcement and prosecutors should be able to utilize the same tools to fight these organized gangs that terrorize our communities.

“The House has twice passed this legislation – once in May of last year and again earlier this year. Unfortunately, this common-sense, bipartisan anti-gang effort has stalled in the Senate, which *still* has yet to act. I’m hopeful the Senate will join this effort with the House, the Attorney General, the Justice Department and the Bush Administration, to pass this legislation cracking down on gang activity and protecting the public from gang violence.”

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